

CHAPTER XI!

INCEST

Definition. — Incest notion was produced from the folkways.
— The notion
that inbreeding is harmful. — Status-wife, work-wife, love-wife
— The abomi-
nation of incest. — The incest taboo is strongest in the
strongest groups.
Incest in ethnography. — Incest in civilized states. — Where
the line is drawn,
and why. — Human self-selection. — Restriction by biological
doctrine not
sufficiently warranted. — Summary of the matter now.

508. Definition of incest. Incest is the marital
union of a man
and a woman who are akin within the limits of a
prohibition cur-
rent at the time in the laws or mores of the
group. The primi-
tive notion of kinship did not divide kinship into
grades of
remoteness as we do. Very often it was counted
by classes or
age strata. In the totem system all the women of
his mother's
totem were tabooed to a man, although their
cousinship to him-
self might be very remote. At the same time, he
could marry
his father's sister's daughter, or his mother's
brother's daughter,
unless his father and his uncle had married women
of the same
totem. Inasmuch as a man and his wife must have
different
totems and the children took the totem of their
mother, a man
might marry his own daughter. Generally this was
forbidden by
supplementary rules, but in Buka and North
Bougainville it
occurs not infrequently.¹ The varieties of the
consanguinity
taboo are very numerous. They are entirely
different in theory
under the mother family and the father family.
They are now
very different in different states of our Union.² If the
taboo on
marriage is not defined in terms of " blood " or
assumed kinship,
violation of it is not incest. For instance, in the
mediaeval
church, two persons who had been sponsors in
baptism to the
same child might not marry. Also, if two persons

are debarred

¹ Parkinson, *Ethnog. d. Nordwestl Salomo Ins.*, 6.

² Snyder, *Geog. of Marriage*.